



AWT Guides Mercy Ships' Captains and Crew As They Bring Hospital Services, Hope and Healing to the World's Poor

Mercy Ships, the global charitable organization that is world famous for using hospital ships to deliver free health care services to the poor, approached Applied Weather Technology (AWT) to ask if we would provide our BonVoyage (BVS) graphical marine voyage optimization system to help support the organization's humanitarian cause, and we were honored to comply. AWT first began donating BVS to Mercy Ships in 2000, and since then has continued to provide Mercy Ships with complimentary data, system upgrades and support.

Mercy Ships serves the urgent surgical needs of the poor in developing nations and has performed more than 41,000 life-changing operations such as cleft lip and palate, cataract removal, straightening of crossed eyes, orthopedic and facial reconstruction since 1978.

Situation – Hurricane Season Threatened to Damage Mercy Ships' Sensitive Medical Equipment

As Jon Fadely, Marine Operations Director for Mercy Ships, tells the story, Mercy Ships was working years ago on the eastern coast of Central America, between Guatemala and Honduras, in the "catchers' mitt of hurricanes," when captains and crew began to explore new ways to get better weather information on board and sought out the opportunity to use BVS.



"In my experience, we have had fewer problems due to inclement weather because there has been more and better weather information available to us thanks to AWT."

**– Captain Tim Tretheway,
Master of the Africa Mercy,
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Case Study: Mercy Ships

“BVS has a wonderful way of turning words into pictures,” said Fadely, who as a former Captain for Mercy Ships used BVS for several years aboard the Caribbean Mercy, one of the Mercy Ships that is now retired. “The biggest advantage of BVS is definitely crew, vessel and medical equipment safety.”

The Mercy Ship Africa Mercy stays in port for about ten months at a time, where medical professionals on board the hospital ship treat patients and perform life-transforming surgeries while the ship is docked. When the vessel travels between destinations, it does not carry patients, but does carry sensitive medical equipment. It is of paramount importance for the ship to avoid inclement weather and sea conditions in order to protect the equipment, prevent crew injury and vessel damage.

“Hospital equipment is highly susceptible to damage. We’re loaded with a CT scanner and X-ray machines that are not designed for being bounced around,” said Captain Tim Tretheway, Master of the Africa Mercy, the world’s largest non-governmental hospital ship. “Before we had the BVS system, one of our big dental lamps came loose from its lashings and did a self-destruct.”

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Solution – Mercy Ships Uses BVS to Find Routes with the Most Moderate Weather and Sea Conditions

Captain Tretheway used the latest version of BVS in February 2009 to help navigate the safest and most fuel-efficient course for the Africa Mercy to the ship’s assignment in Benin, West Africa. He also used BVS to look at conditions that could affect the ship’s arrival time and to help keep the ship on schedule, which was critical because 4,000 people were lined up, waiting for medical treatment.

In addition, Captain Tretheway says he leverages BVS to evaluate potential future voyages being considered by the management of Mercy Ships and to conduct planning as part of preparations before the ship is deployed to a new location.

“We use BVS to find the routes with the most moderate conditions and then we’ll take those routes,” said Captain Tretheway. “It’s simple to check conditions ahead. You flip on the flat screen with BVS and it’s easy to get a complete, real-time picture of the weather by simply moving the mouse over a specific location. In addition to wind, pressure and sea conditions, we highly value the NCOM current data. In my experience, we have had fewer problems due to inclement weather because there has been more and better weather information available to us thanks to AWT.”

www.awtworldwide.com

AWT Worldwide Headquarters
158 Commercial St.
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
T: +1 408 731 8600
F: +1 408 731 8601

AWT New Jersey
T: +1 609 275 5488
F: +1 609 750 9793

AWT Europe
T: +44 1224 857920
F: +44 1224 582168

AWT Germany
T: +49 4182 287132
F: +49 4182 287133

AWT Hong Kong
T: +852 2865 0282
F: +852 2865 0228

AWT Shanghai
T: +86 21 6103 4824

AWT Korea
T: +82 2 739 3464
F: +82 2 739 3404

AWT QuWeather
T: +82 2 737 7007
F: +82 2 737 8521